

Marsh, the London Reservoirs, the Severn Estuary, Skokholm and the breeding quarters of the Kite (a Welsh village called Hush)—with occasional trips to the Camargue.

Distribution abroad.—Almost ubiquitous; coinciding remarkably with the distribution of the Fervent Ornithoscopter *Ornithoscopta per-fervens*, on which it is partially parasitic.

Description.—Little known, although in the opinion of Elliott (*in oratione recta*) is not infrequent in museum collections, many skins becoming 'hoodwinked.' Brown speculum characteristic of third year female, though this is often obscured. General plumage, buffish fawn shading to fawnish buff. *Soft parts* (i.e. hard parts): fawnish horn shading to hornish fawn.

Characters and allied forms.—Immediately recognizable by the fact that the true basipterygoid processes are absent, but more anteriorly the basisphenoid rostrum bears a pair of facets projecting only slightly beyond its general surface, the so-called secondary basipterygoid processes, with which the anterior ends of the pterygoids articulate. Represented in Arctic snowstorms by *D.s. spurissima* (the so-called Pomatorhine Hoodwink), characterised by its more woolly appearance. *D.s. sarah-janae* (O.Hebrides), *D.s. mrs-jonesae* (Mull) and *D.s. gretae-garbo* (Clerkenwell) are doubtfully separable¹. Bones of a closely related genus, *Palaeodissimulatrix*, have been found in kitchen middens.

15, OX LANE,
HARPENDEN, HERTS,
ENGLAND.

M. F. A. MEIKLEJOHN

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18. THE RECORD RUSSELL'S VIPER [*VIPERA RUSSELLI* (SHAW)]

Up to the present date the largest recorded Russell's Viper measured 5 ft. 6 inches. That specimen was killed at Cuddalore, North Arcot, in 1894—(*Journal*, Vol. VIII No. 4. p. 565.) and was mentioned by Wall at page 3 of Vol. XVIII No. 2 as the largest record known to him.

¹ This has not prevented the author of these names, in a laudable desire to immortalize various respectable females, from attempting to separate them until they have become extinct. This process has been termed 'going into a cline.'

The Russell's Viper shown in the accompanying photograph¹ was killed on 20th September 1948 on the Attikunna Estate, Nilgiris, elevation 3,200 ft. It was measured by W. T. Broadhurst to be 6 ft. and $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch long, and the pole held by one of the men in the photograph was cut to the exact length of the snake. This photograph and the particulars concerning it are given to me by Mr. W. T. Broadhurst of the Jessie Estate, Malabar.

BANGALORE,
2nd June, 1950.

R. W. BURTON,
Lt.-Col. I.A. (Retd.)

19. A DHAMAN OR RAT-SNAKE [*PTYAS MUCOSUS*
(LINN.)] JUMPING

On our way to the Caves on 25th June (Kanheri National Park) we startled a 6 ft. Dhaman which climbed up an adjacent bamboo, and laid itself on a horizontal branch at a height of about 18 ft. from the ground.

The snake was watched in this position for about 10 minutes while it lay motionless. A stone was then flung at it and this resulted in the snake jumping from its position on to the ground where it landed with a heavy thud and disappeared into a bush.

114, APOLLO STREET,
BOMBAY,
20th July, 1950.

V. K. CHARI,
Asst. Curator

[This is interesting and, if a common habit, may possibly provide the core of the frequent stories one hears in India about 'flying' snakes.—EDS.]

20. THE RECORD HAMADRYAD OR KING COBRA [*NAJA*
HANNAH (CANTOR)] AND LENGTHS & WEIGHTS
OF LARGE SPECIMENS

In his authoritative article on the Hamadryad in the *Society's Journal*, (Vol. xxx. pp. 189-195) Colonel F. Wall gave the length of the largest authentic specimen known to him as 15 ft. 5 inches.

In his contribution 'Early Days in Malaya', (Vol. 38, p. 257) the late Mr. H. E. Burgess mentioned a specimen 16 ft. $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches long.

A letter published in *The Field* of 23rd October 1948 Mr. C. A. Gibson-Hill of the Raffles Museum, Singapore, records a specimen taken alive near Fort Dickson, Negri Sembilan, which was kept in captivity for some time by Mr. J. Leonard of Ruthken Estate and later sent to the London Zoo, where it died. It measured at death 18 ft. 2 inches.

¹ The photo is not clear enough for reproduction. Eds.